

A HISTORY OF THE MINNEAPOLIS KIMBALL ORGAN IN PICTURES

Michael Barone

The Minneapolis Auditorium

Architect's drawing shows the original plan. The left end was to be "Orchestra Hall", with the portion right of the tower the "Arena". Orchestra Hall was never built.



The Minneapolis Auditorium

Opening day, June, 1927. Note the clothing – it must have been a cold June.



The Minneapolis Auditorium

Grant Street
in 1930.



The Minneapolis Auditorium

Wesley
Methodist
Church, still
standing
today.



The Minneapolis Auditorium

Wesley Temple Building.

One of the tenants was S. J. Groves & Sons, a heavy equipment company responsible for building much of the US freeway system in the 1950's and 1960's.



The Minneapolis Auditorium

The
Minneapolis
Auditorium



The Minneapolis Auditorium

Central Lutheran Church, still standing today, but with a new bell tower. Entrances to the major freeways are next to the church.

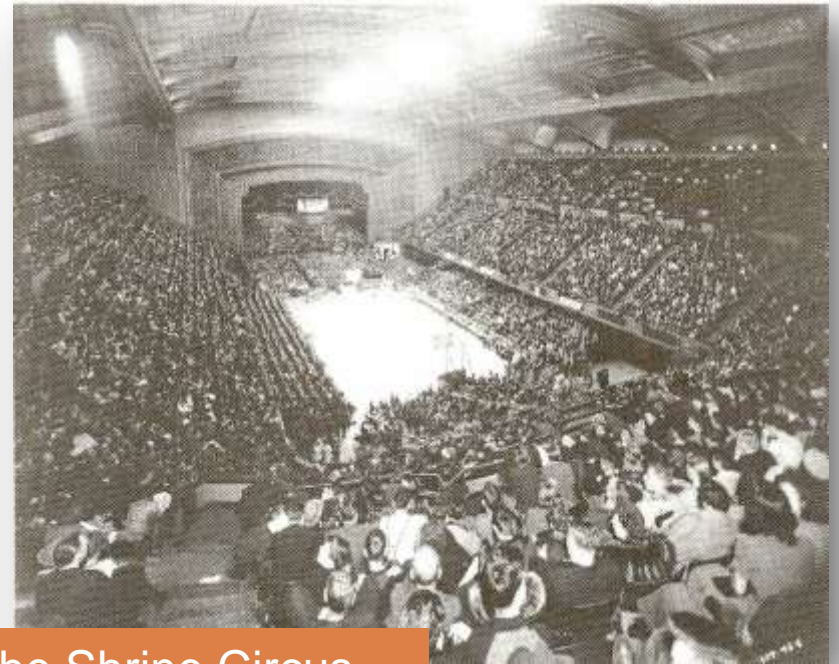


The Minneapolis Auditorium

For some events, seating could be up to 8,000-10,000



Seating for basketball.



Other events included the Shrine Circus and an annual *Messiah* benefit performance.



Entrance hall

Substantial materials were used throughout, including Mankato stone

The “Voice of Minneapolis”

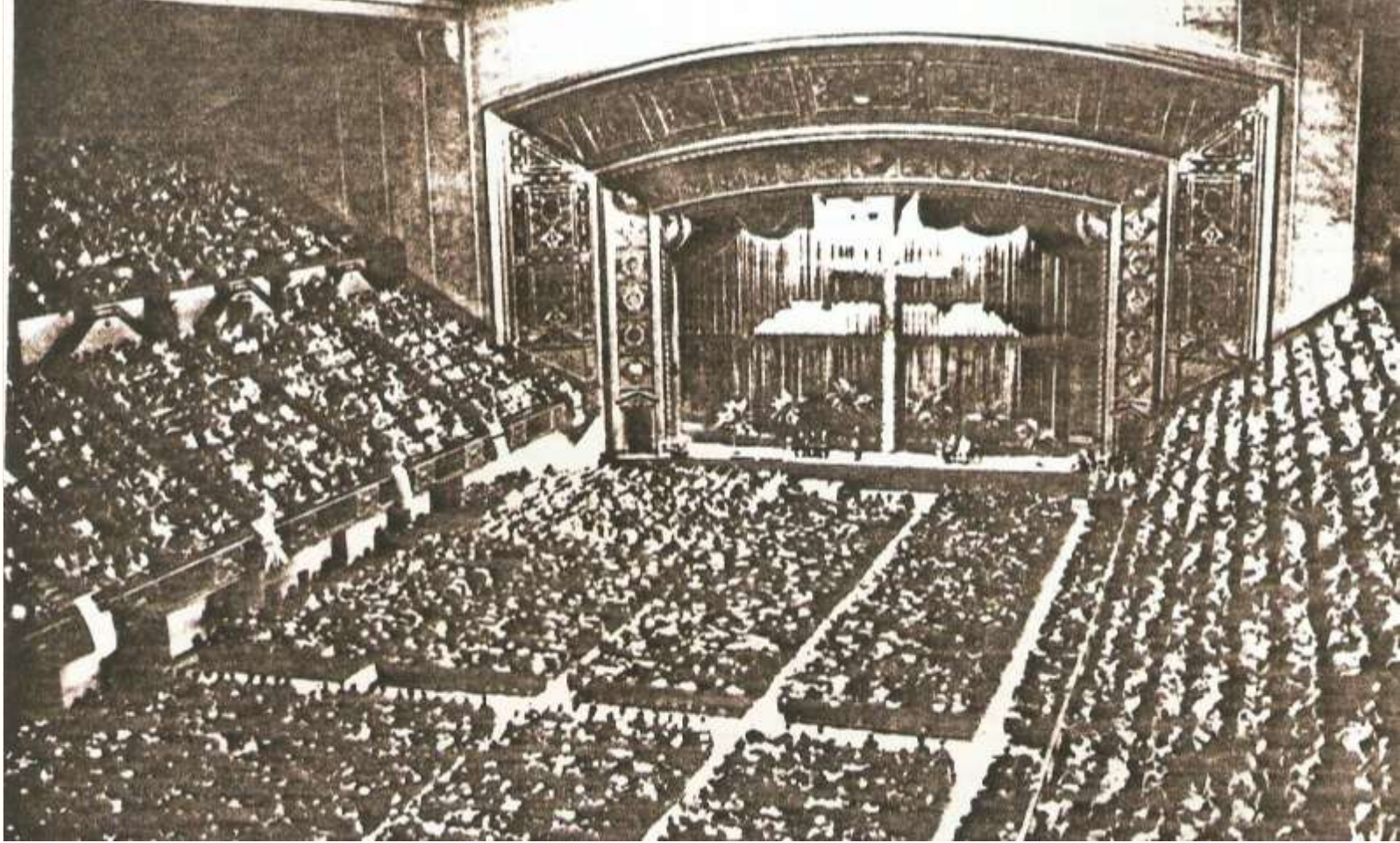


KIMBALL WILL BUILD 'MINNEAPOLIS ORGAN

FIVE-MANUAL IS SPECIFIED

Contract Awarded for Latest Addition
to Great Municipal Instruments—
Second Console to Provide
Theater Unit.

Minneapolis has placed with the W. W. Kimball Company of Chicago the contract for its large municipal organ. The organ committee of the city reached its decision July 1 after long deliberations and going into the subject thoroughly.



Minneapolis Auditorium, 1949

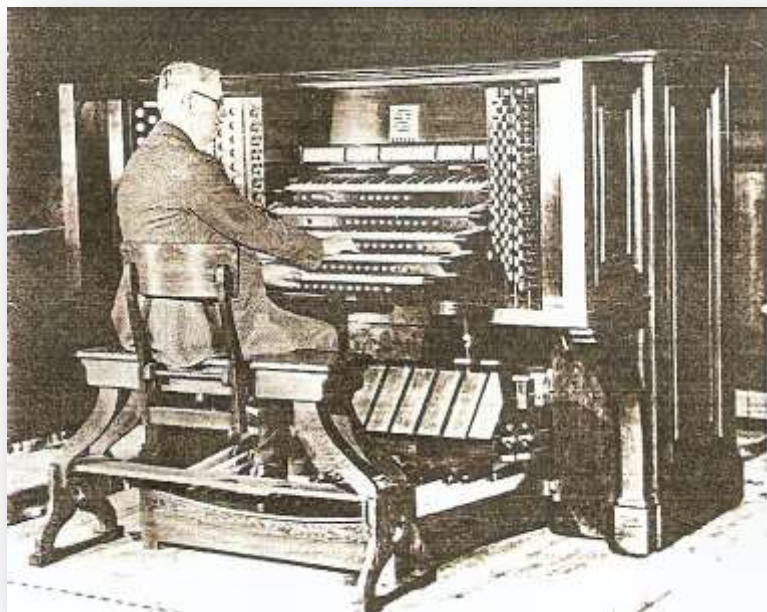
Pipes were installed in tall, narrow chambers on each side of the stage, speaking through the elaborate grills.

The Minneapolis Auditorium

This closeup of the great proscenium arch gives a sense of the massive scale of this building. The 32' open wood Diapason was on the right, just behind the grill.



Two consoles playing one organ

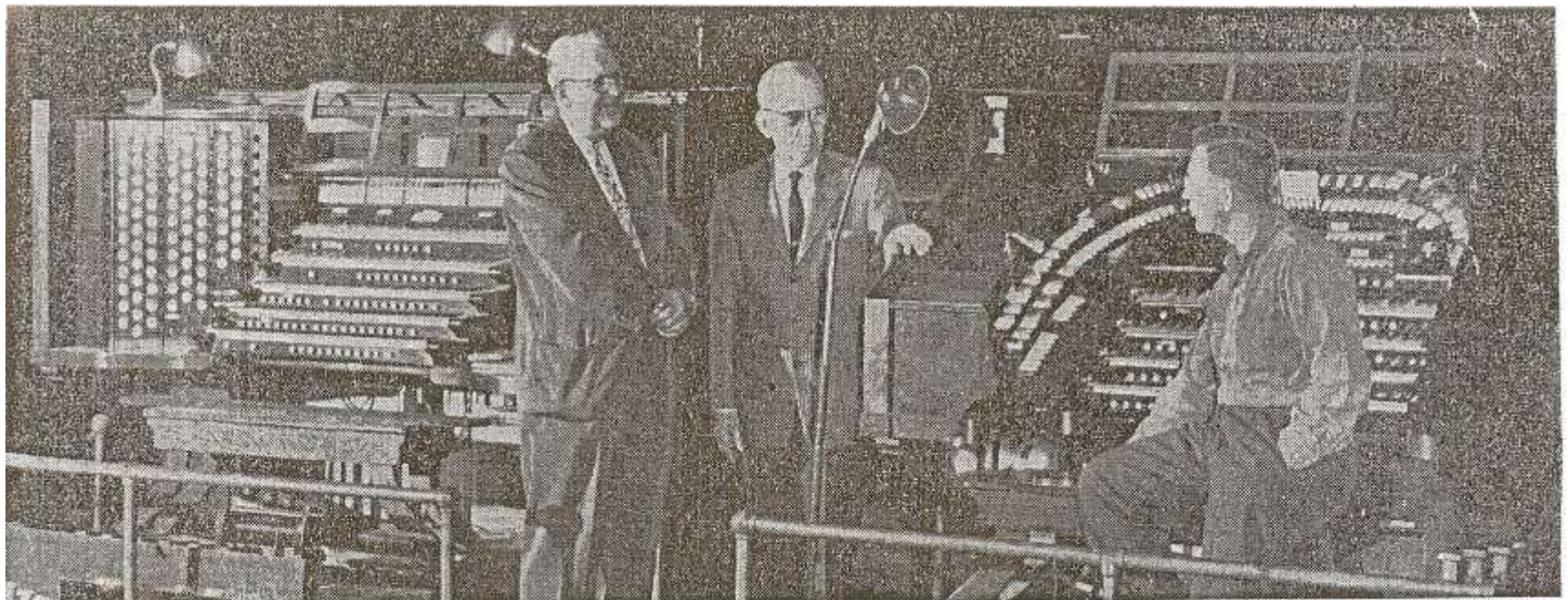


The “concert” console has access to all but one of the 120+ ranks from 5 manuals



The “theater” console has access to over 20 unit ranks from 4 manuals

Original console installation



FROM LEFT IN FRONT OF CONCERT AND THEATER CONSOLES ARE DAHL, IVERSON AND MILNE

Dahl was manager of the Hall; Harry Iverson designed and installed the organ; Milne was Iverson's assistant.



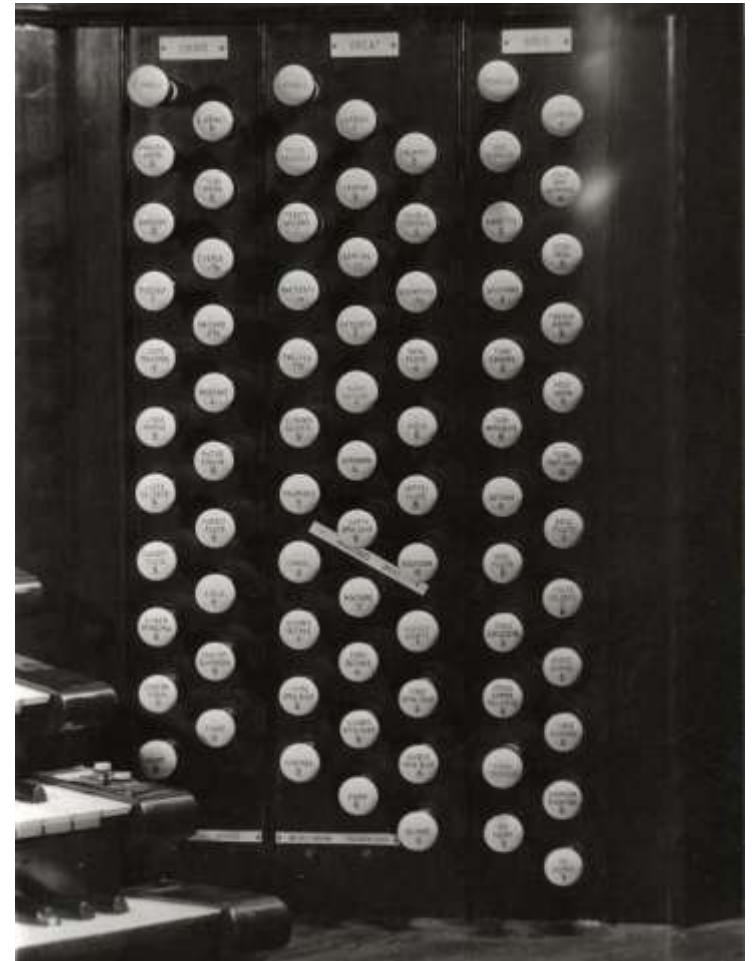
Consoles on their individual elevators

Though originally installed in front of the stage, years later the floor was raised to provide for an exhibit hall in the basement. The consoles were moved to a stage position approximately where the doors are located, one on each side.

The great 5-manual concert console controlling over 120 ranks



Performer's view of the stops



Concert console -- 1965

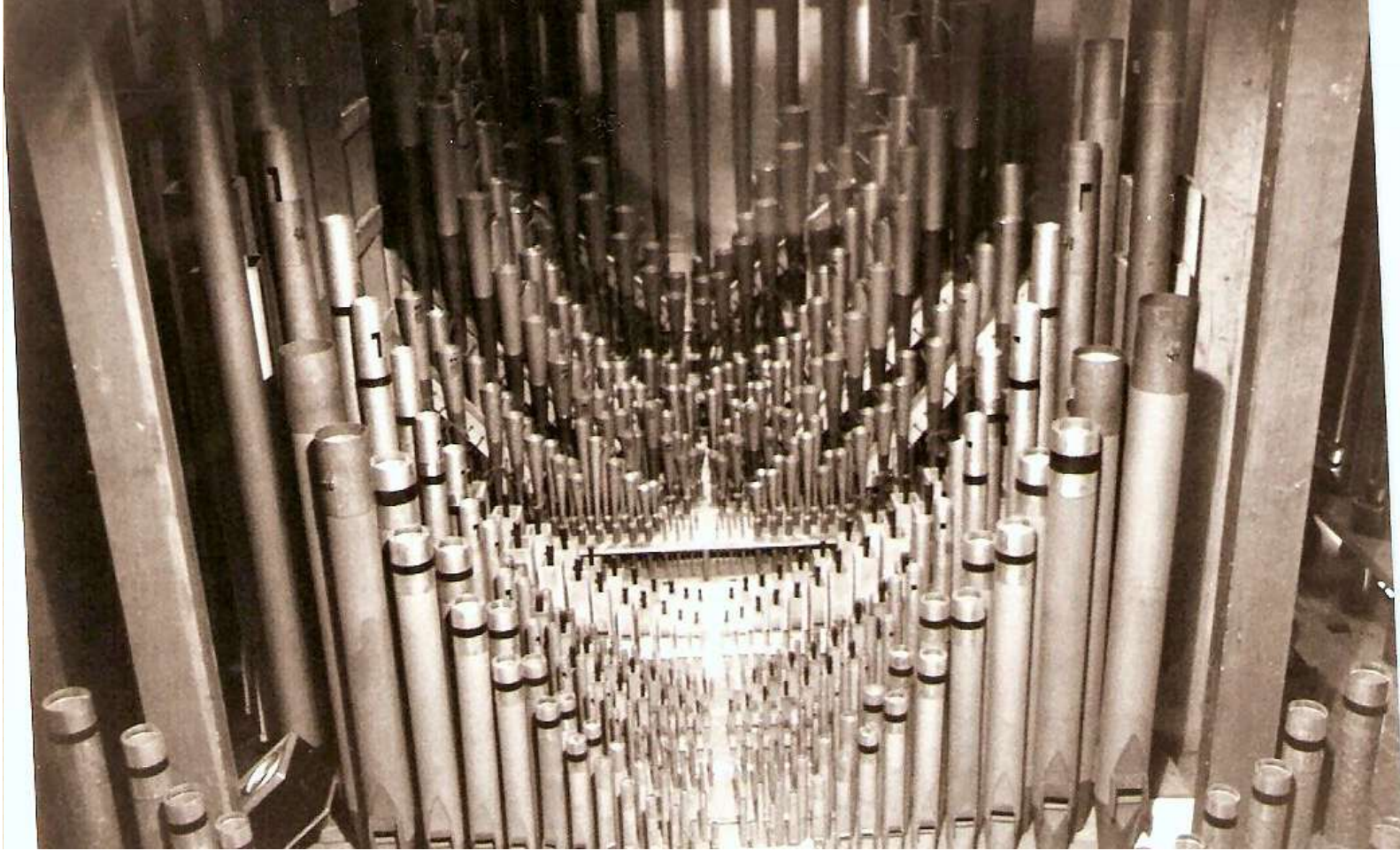
Ed
Berryman
facing the
camera





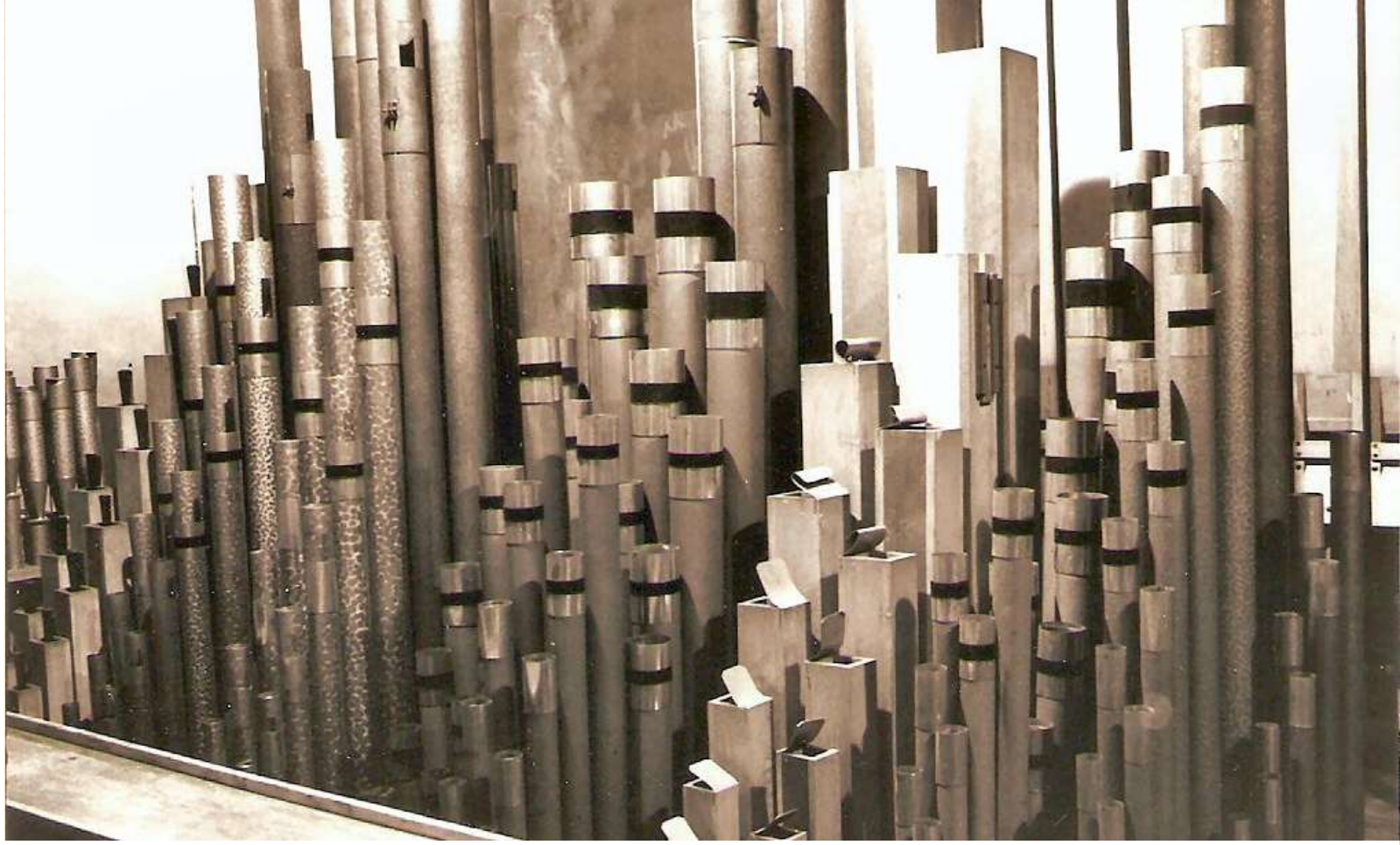
Two consoles today

In storage at the Minneapolis Convention Center.



Pipe chamber

A few hundred of the nearly 10,000 pipes as they stood before the Auditorium was torn down.



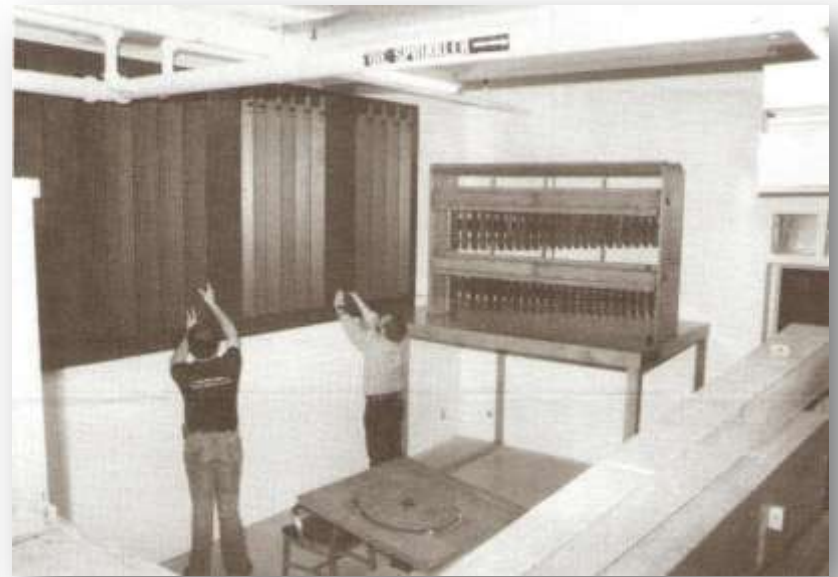
More pipes

Another view of some of the pipes. They are made of tin + lead (spotted), lead (medium gray), wood (square) and zinc (dark gray).

Minneapolis Convention Center

- The organ was rarely used during its life, perhaps because it could not be seen. The Auditorium also held many events where an organ would not be appropriate. It was largely forgotten.
- Expensive maintenance was largely deferred until restoration to playable condition was completed in the mid-1980's for a series of concerts, tours and recordings.
- In the late 1980's, a group of volunteers, headed by Philip Brunelle, Michael Barone and the late Ed Berryman worked with the City to preserve the organ and find it a new home.
- A "Farewell for Now" concert with the Minnesota Orchestra and Hector Olivera was staged just before the organ was disassembled and placed in storage.
- The Minneapolis Auditorium was razed to make room for the Minneapolis Convention Center (MCC).
- The organ was partially assembled in the MCC in the early 1990's. It is currently there in storage.

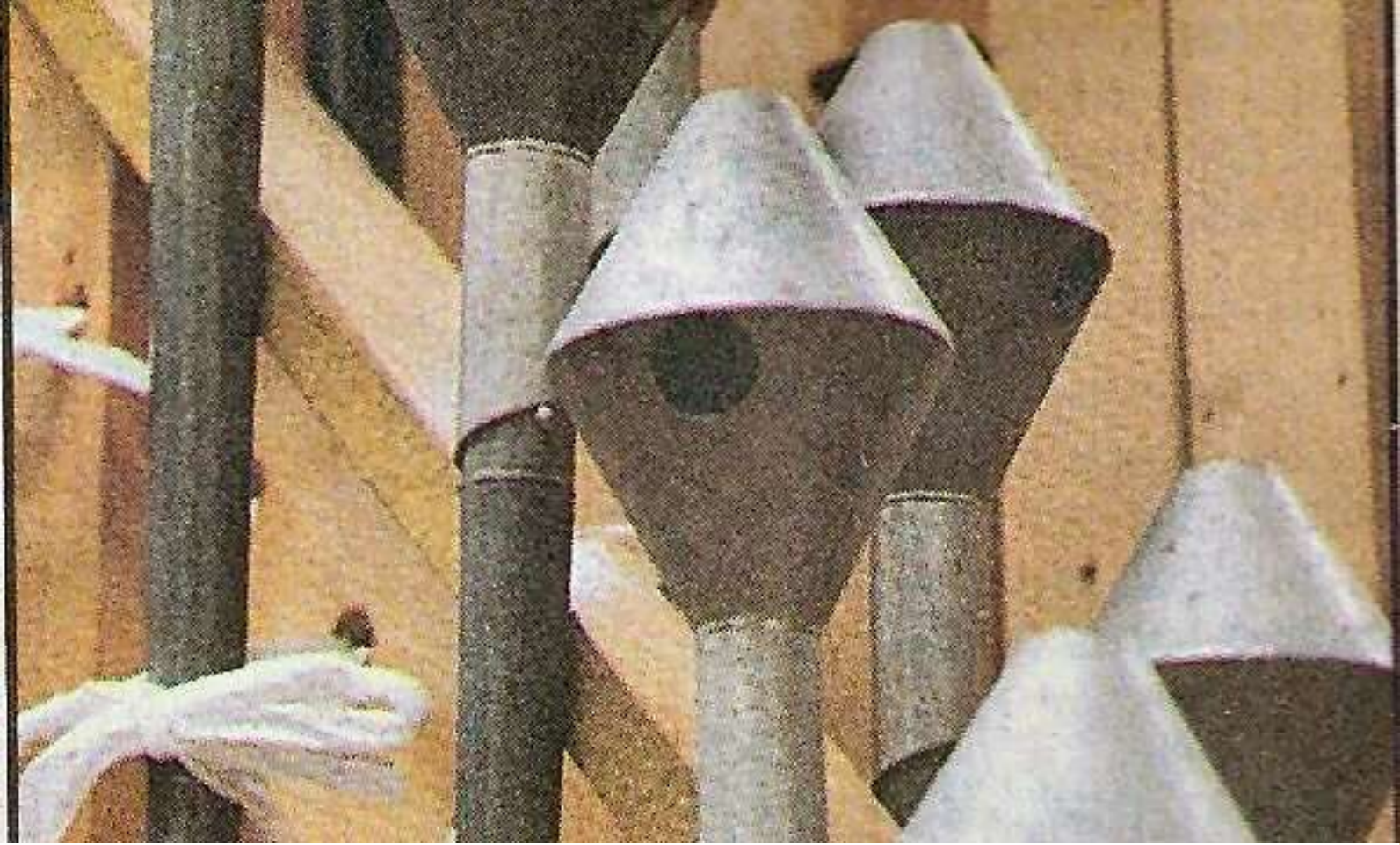
Some restorative work



Pipes are whistles

Minneapolis
City Official
blows into a
medium
sized wood
pipe.





English Horn

The organ “English Horn” has a double-cone top. There are 61 of these pipes needed to play a melody – one pipe for each key.

Organ clarinet with flared tops



Pipes of “small scale”



One of many chambers



32' pipes stored vertically



32' Violone pipes against wall



Pipes stored in crates





Another chamber view

English Horn in the foreground

Wood pipes in storage





Wind chests stored on edge

When placed in normal horizontal position, a pipe would fit in each hole.

Wood pipe storage

There are so many pipes (almost 10,000) that small ones must be stored inside the big ones. The biggest pipes are 32' long.



More pipes in storage crates



The blower

Blower runs on 440 volts. The first time it was turned on in the Convention Center it drew so much power that the lights went out.

A formal “turning on the wind” event was held for the Steering Committee on August 4, 1992. Unfortunately, there are no wind lines in place to move the air to the pipes.



More pipes in storage



More windchests stored on end



Wood pipes can be tapered

These large pipes (16' long) are stored upside down.



A percussion “stop”

Similar to a xylophone but played from the organ keys. A pneumatic motor pushes a hammer against each bar.



...and more pipe crates



Wood pipes, one with a bend



Miscellaneous air ducts



Part of the electrical switch system



Some of the biggest wood pipes

These pipes are so long that they come apart in the middle. They have yet to be reassembled to their full 32' length.



Pedal pipes, upside down





In the Convention Center

The organ chambers open through the structural steel that lines the building above the perimeter white walls. Chambers can be seen from the outside on the south side of the building on the second dome from the west. The organ is all here. Will the “Voice of Minneapolis” speak again?